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A
S E R M O N
PREACHED AT THE
ANNIVERSARY MEETING
OF THE
SONS OF THE CLERGY,

IN THE
CATHEDRAL CHURCH of ST. PAUL,

ON THURSDAY, MAY 10, 1798.

BY THE REV. GERRARD ANDREWES, A.M.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
LISTS OF THE NOBILITY, CLERGY, AND GENTRY, WHO HAVE BEEN
STEWARDS FOR THE FEASTS OF THE SONS OF THE CLERGY,
TOGETHER WITH THE NAMES OF THE PREACHERS, AND THE
SUMS COLLECTED AT THE ANNIVERSARY MEETINGS, SINCE THE
YEAR 1721.

L O N D O N :

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YARD; AND CADELL AND DAVIES, IN THE STRAND.

[Price One Shilling.]

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TO WHICH ARE ADDED
LISTS OF THE NOMINATEES, CLERGY, AND GENTLEMEN WHO HAVE BEEN
STEWARDS FOR THE HEASTS OF THE SONS OF THE CLERGY,
TOGETHER WITH THE NAMES OF THE PREACHERS, AND THE
SUMS COLLECTED AT THE ANNIVERSARY MEETING, SINCE THE
YEAR 1791.

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(S T E W A R D S

FOR THE LATE FEAST OF THE SONS OF THE CLERGY)

THIS

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL

AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE PREACHER.

THE PREACHER

AND OUTRAGED SERVANTS

BY THEIR FAITHFUL

IS RESPECTFULLY REQUESTED

DELIVERED AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST

DISCOURSE

THIS

FOR THE LAST OF THE SONS OF THE CLERGY

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His Royal Highness the Duke of York.

TO

I COR. IV. 13.

BEING DEFAMED, WE INTREAT.

IN these words are contained two circumstances which, although they in general appertain to every professor of Christianity, yet demand in an especial manner the attention of the Ministers of the Gospel. The first respects what they are to suffer, the latter how they are to act.

The Apostles had been frequently informed by their blessed Master, during his abode on earth, that all manner of evil should be spoken against them falsely for his sake ; but whenever this should happen, they were exhorted to rejoice, and were instructed (while looking forward to a glorious reward hereafter) “ *to bless those that persecuted them, and to pray for them that despitefully used them.*” St. Paul having fully proved, during his ministry, the truth of our Lord’s prediction, took earnest care strictly to obey his precepts. He had planted a considerable Church at Corinth, but by reason of his absence, the members of it, in the short space of two years, relapsed into great disorders. Several corrupt teachers had arisen amongst them, who, by mixing philosophical speculations with the Christian doctrines,

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trines, artfully misled the people, and caused them to treat the character of St. Paul with contempt. In several parts of both his Epistles to the Corinthians he confutes the calumnies of his malicious opponents; he asserts and vindicates his apostolical authority boldly, “in demonstration
“ of the spirit and with power;” warning his converts to take especial heed not to be deceived by the evil suggestions of those, whose minds were blinded by the god of this world. “We have renounced (said he) the hidden things
“ of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, but by manifestation of the Spirit commending ourselves to every
“ man’s conscience in the sight of God *.” An example studiously to be imitated by the Ministers of Jesus in *every* age, and especially at a time when there have arisen so many, “who, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his
“ subtilty, would corrupt our minds in like manner from
“ the simplicity which is in Christ.”

No man, I imagine, can be insensible of the evils which, through the secret wiles as well as more open attacks of the wicked, now hang over our heads; and it is our duty to take every opportunity of opposing their attempts. One (which has of late been crowned with some success) is, the spreading of an opinion, that the Ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are to be considered in the same light as the Ministers of any other religion; as the mere supporters of an establishment of which they happen to be members,

* 2 Cor. iv. 2.

and

and who are very little concerned for the welfare of those committed to their charge.

If there are any who, professing themselves to be Christians, have nevertheless adopted this sentiment, of such I intreat the attention, not whilst I refute the calumny, (since that can only be done effectually by a review of our general conduct) but whilst I advert to some circumstances which may at first view be apparently of little consequence, but which, as tending to lessen the respectability of the ministerial character, are, I apprehend, in reality of very great importance.

To some, perhaps, it may appear a little inconsistent with that spirit of meekness, which in almost every page of the Gospel of Christ is enjoined his followers, that we should stand forth the pleaders of our own cause, and the proclaimers of our own merits; and we may be told that "others should praise us, and not our own lips;" for "if we honour ourselves, our honour is nothing." We confess the truth of the observation, as coming from the Fountain of all Truth, and whenever (as men) we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think; if, instead of being Shepherds of the flock, we *lord* it over God's heritage, we must expect (what indeed we ought to meet with) that abasement which we are assured *must* finally attend *those* who exalt themselves. But if on one hand we are not to be the Ministers of our own fame or

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fancies,

fancies, so neither on the other are we to be the timid deserters of the Christian cause, through fear of censure from its enemies. Whilst, as men, we are "in all lowliness of mind to esteem others better than ourselves," we are bound towards the contemners of our ministry "to give place by subjection, no not for an hour;" and when many worse than the corrupt teachers of old, mentioned by St. Paul, are labouring to turn away the minds of all men from the faith, and to remove far away the influence and sanctions of religion, we must never be ashamed of "that authority which the Lord hath given us for edification;" but speaking all things in truth, we are bound to magnify, not ourselves, but our office.—Now this we do conformably to the injunctions of Scripture, when we exhort you to "account of us as Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God;" nor do we boast beyond our measure when we assert, that in these kingdoms are many very faithful Stewards of the word, who by their zealous and prudent exertions abundantly shew that they take good heed unto the ministry which they have received in the Lord. They labour, and too often indeed suffer reproach, which, if it rested with themselves, might be made a source of happiness; but mischief alas! is thereby derived on the community at large; since scarcely any thing can more effectually tend to banish from the minds of the great body of the people the influence of Christianity, than the too general custom of joining the idea of its sanctions, with that of an intention to deceive

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on the part of its ministers ; as well as of holding forth the vices and frauds of Pagan superstition, as necessarily annexed to priests of every description, and consequently to the Ministers of the Religion of Jesus. Yet this has been done, and is still doing, with all that artful malice, which best characterizes the agents of Satan ; for it is done, not by means which might alarm the cautious, but by methods which can scarcely excite apprehension, and in a manner adapted above all others to make the strongest impression on the uneducated mind, *by the exhibition of profane and ludicrous prints, in almost all the streets of our city* ; the direct tendency of which is to lead the undiscerning multitude to imagine that the Religion of Jesus Christ is a fit subject for mirth, and little else than a fable imposed on the credulity and fears of man, and supported by the fraud or power of those who are interested in its success. So fully am I convinced that the accumulated load of evil which now threatens this nation, has in a great measure been produced by means of this particular species of seduction, that I cannot but call upon those whom it more immediately concerns, to give it their most earnest attention. The spotless minds of our children are thus defiled by images the most impure : the hopes and fears of a future existence are rendered of no force, and such dangerous opinions thus insensibly infused into the minds of the lower orders of the people, as threaten the overthrow of all that is most dear to us. We intreat moreover those who have prostituted their abilities to such wretched

wretched purposes, as well as the publishers, and I will add preservers also of immoral books, to consider, for their own sakes, that they stand in a very peculiar situation; for as what they do or cause to be done will reach and affect posterity, *it is possible for them to sin even in the grave.*

I should certainly make no remark on the *perverse* manner in which we are sometimes treated, was it not manifest that Religion itself is attacked, and suffers in the person of its Ministers. It is needless for me to describe (what has been so often done by much abler men) in how unchristianlike a manner our words and actions are frequently misrepresented. If we are strict in conversation, then are we frequently denominated hypocrites or morose: do we indulge in the ordinary freedoms of it, then are we deemed improperly licentious: if we assert the authority which we have received of Christ, in order to maintain peace and order in his Church, then are we described as assuming dominion over the consciences of our brethren: if we are mild and gentle, then are we termed indolent, and the neglecters of our duty: if we endeavour to preserve that maintenance which has been settled on us, as Ministers of the Gospel, by the piety and munificence of former ages and the laws of the land, are we not, let me ask, too frequently censured, as covetous, contentious, and of rapacious minds? We know indeed that “being reviled we must bless, being defamed we must intreat, even if persecuted we must suffer it;” and the example
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of many who have had trials of this nature before us, will I trust enable us, like them, to “look unto Jesus the “author and finisher of our faith, to run with patience “the race which is set before us,” and to continue your faithful “servants for Jesus’ sake ;” but *as such* we cannot but warn all those of their danger, who represent the doctrines and institutions of Christ as things which may be regarded with indifference, with ridicule, or contempt.

If there are any who ask, How the interests of religion can be affected by the weak and senseless conduct of a few presumptuous libertines ; I would wish them to reflect, whether the seriousness with which they may be convinced the sacred writings ought to be regarded, is not frequently diminished in their minds, by having heard some of its precepts connected with ideas trifling or profane. Should we speak to them (for instance) of the dreadful sentence which the Lord Jesus himself has declared He shall one day pronounce against all impenitent sinners in these awful words, “ * Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, “prepared for the devil and his angels ;” how little, I fear, would it affect their minds, if they have heard men, whose character and abilities they may perhaps admire, ingeniously endeavour to prove that such an evil spirit doth not exist ! What inducement can they have to resist the temptations of Satan, if they have been taught by the subtle disputers of this world, to regard the punishment to which he and

* Matt. xxv. 41.

his servants will be consigned, as the offspring of superstition, and fit only to excite the terrors of the young and ignorant? What effect moreover can our exhortations to virtue, can our dissuaves from vice, have upon your minds, if you are taught to believe that we stand forth the "prophefiers of deceits," the "preachers of smooth things," for your amusement only, or the hypocritical displayers of our own talents or fancies, regardless of the hour when your souls shall be required at our hands? When the multitude is taught to connect with the ministry of the Gospel every gross impurity which would have disgraced the worship of Bacchus and of Baal, is it any wonder that the *precepts* of that Gospel should cease to have the influence they ought? And when we are regarded not as the Feeders of the Flock of Christ, but of ourselves, is it to be expected that the sheep should hear our voice? If such a prejudice hath taken root in the minds of any, against those who watch for their souls, it is our duty, as well as their own, humbly to pray to God to remove it; and it is no less our duty to intreat him, that the enemies of our faith who have sown the tares may be forgiven: but we wish them at the same time to remember, that any attempt to degrade either the places, persons, or forms set apart for the ministration of religion, is an offence of a much more heinous nature, and of more dangerous tendency than perhaps their seducers have led them to imagine; for these are the express words of Christ, when he sent forth his

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Disciples:

Disciples : “ * He that despiseth you” (that is, not as men, but as Ministers of the Gospel) “ despiseth *me*, and he “ that despiseth *me*, despiseth *him that sent me*.” When we read moreover in the Prophecy of Amos this fearful declaration of God against the contemners of his law ; “ † Behold I will send a famine in the land, not a famine “ of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word “ of the Lord ;” Is it either a weak or needless apprehension, lest for the same sins, the same evil should come also upon *us* ; lest “ the law which is despised perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients ?”

That *some* of us may be unworthy members of Christ's body, it would be an high degree of arrogance to deny, but we know that “ every man must bear his own “ burden :” To impute therefore the misconduct of the few to the *whole order* ; to accuse *all* of handling the word of God deceitfully, merely because *some* are not doers of the word they preach, is in no small degree a proof of a want of that Christian charity which “ rejoiceth not in “ iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth.” By the impartial and unprejudiced, we shall I trust be found very unlike those to whom we are compared : Let them who place the Ministers of Jesus on a level with the disciples of Mahomet or Confucius examine strictly, and see if there is a single branch of our office, but what is as truly beneficial to others as it is honourable in itself. What powers do we

* Luke x. 16.

† Amos viii. 11.

pretend to exercise but what are conducive to the happiness and well-being of mankind? To cultivate their minds and correct their manners—to reclaim the wicked and comfort the feeble-minded—to promote as much as in us lies peace, love, and universal righteousness—to pray to God for his people—to bless them in his name, and to dispense to them his ordinances for their spiritual comfort and edification, are the peculiar duties of our station: and let us ask not only of the pious Christian but of any serious man, what is there in any of these things which can give offence? Let it be observed also, that in the established Church of England priestcraft is impossible: the word of God is, in this happy country, open to all. You are exhorted to search the Scriptures for yourselves—you are enjoined by no means “to believe every spirit, but * to try “the spirits whether they be of God,” and “if † any “man preach any other Gospel than that ye have received,” it is expressly declared that he must stand accursed. It is certainly then most evident that the Ministers of Christ’s religion can be no deceivers, for they exhort all men, in the name and by the command of their Master, to examine the purity of their doctrines by a rule which must necessarily detect every attempt to mislead by enabling every man to judge for himself; that “your faith “should not stand in the wisdom of this world, but in the “power of God.”

* 1 John iv. 1.

† Gal. i. 8.

And here we cannot but lament, that the retired and unassuming Benefactors of mankind, however usefully employed, are for the most part not only without due praise, (which they seek not indeed) but even without regard. The effect of their labours and exertions, because they catch not the eye of a busy world, is too often by that world altogether denied; and their abundant utility, because it comes not recommended by "the enticing words of man's wisdom," is too much undervalued: they are consoled however by the reflection, that " * it is a very small thing to be judged of man's judgement," and that their " Father who seeth in secret will reward them openly." What though the " bodily presence be weak and the speech contemptible," the word of God which ye receive tendeth not less to your sanctification and redemption, nor will it less effectually work in them that believe. If on the contrary we speak " with the tongues of angels," what shall it profit unless charity also have her perfect work, and " the word spoken be mixed with faith † in them that hear it?" He who is possessed of the greatest excellencies has no cause for boasting, since he possesses nothing but what he received from God, and for the abuse of which, if he dare to abuse them, he must hereafter be accountable. As for those who may perhaps be distinguished by defects, so they spring not from inattention or neglect in the performance of their duty, they have this consolation, that, whatever man may do, the

* 1 Cor. iv. 3.

† Heb. iv. 2.

Almighty never expected more than he gave. Too many however are apt to forget that it is the Gospel of Christ which we are to regard, and not the method in which it may be delivered. The Almighty is no respecter of persons, and the eloquent in his sight are no more than the rude in speech. He formed the mouth and hath given unto every man whatsoever pleased him: the precepts of the Gospel want not the eloquence of man to recommend them; plain, yet majestic, they will ever be the same, by whomsoever uttered. To all therefore who seek amusement only in the ministry of the word, to whom, in the expressive language of the prophet, the exhortation of the preacher is only * “as the song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument,” it will be useful to recollect, that the excellency of the labourer is not made manifest by the excellency of speech, but “the wise master builder is known by the foundation which he layeth.”

That many of our order have been wise in an abundant degree, let their works testify: a cloud of witnesses have, in former times, born testimony to the faith, in opposition to enemies the most violent, and with undaunted courage sealed it with their blood; and in our own days, we behold men of the most exalted talents studiously employed in the business of their great office, labouring to instruct the ignorant and convince the gainfayers. By their well-

* Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

timed exertions, as well as the pious efforts of many among the Laity, (whom the Friends of Religion must ever look up to with gratitude and respect) a stop has in some degree been put in this kingdom to that torrent of infidelity which has of late inundated the rest of Europe: to their zeal in an especial manner it is owing, that the public mind has been called back to the consideration of its real interests—that they, whose example will always have a powerful influence on the great body of the people, have been induced to exert it for the preservation of true piety, and the promoting amongst us that fear of God which, contrary to all other fear, * “giveth strong confidence.” We have hope therefore that if not for our own, we may yet be esteemed for our works sake, and be regarded as useful by *them* at least, who knowing and considering the nature of their Saviour’s kingdom, are persuaded that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

We ask, in conclusion, as the temporal reward of our services, a subsistence only, for those whom we leave behind, when we shall have ceased from our labours; and as it is usual with some (in the spirit of that defamation against which we are taught to direct our intreaties) to represent the Clergy as an order of men abounding with the good things of life; it may not be improper to hint that the opinion so generally formed is a very erroneous one; for the few amongst us who are in easy circumstances, possess their

* Prov. xiv. 26.

sufficiency as private persons, exclusive of their public profession, which can never therefore be justly esteemed as an unmerited affluence gained *in* it. I would therefore intreat you not to be led astray by assertions made without proof, nor permit your bowels of compassion to be shut towards those who stand in great need of your assistance.

Were it possible for those who so wantonly decide concerning our temporal estate, to trace the whole course of our lives, they would probably see good reason to change their opinion. In this point as in others, we are not unfrequently misrepresented. In the first place, the regular course of our education, (live as frugally as we can) greatly diminishes, if it does not wholly consume the little fortune which probably a careful and indulgent parent has with difficulty saved: add to this, that too frequently, from a desire (perhaps not altogether blameable in a young man) of connecting himself with those who may be useful to him in more advanced life, he launches out into expences far beyond what prudence allows, and becomes therefore in the outset of life surrounded with difficulties. You will say perhaps that this is the effect of his own folly, and that he should have well weighed the consequences of such ill-judged profusion. Alas! you do not reflect that you are considering what men *ought* to be; I am only describing what they *are*, in order to guard others against similar errors for the future, and to induce you to alleviate evils which you cannot prevent! After a few years, he enters
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upon the duties of his profession, and frequently acquires but little more in it, through the whole course of his life, than would have arisen from the interest of the small patrimony expended on his education. His circumstances as well as his duty oblige him to retirement: they of the same years with himself, in other professions, meet with various pleasures in the course of their connections with the world, which to the young Clergyman (of the rank I am describing) must be utterly unknown. His resources are but very few, though, it must be confessed, of a superior kind: he can only seek them in the animating hope of a glorious reward hereafter, for the faithful discharge of his duty, and in the comforts of domestic life, while he sojourns here. But who knows not that with domestic comforts come also domestic cares? The scanty pittance, scarce enough for one, becomes, when divided, small indeed. Supposing however that during our lifetime we are enabled to provide for ourselves and families, with tolerable comfort, I will even say with much convenience, still the evil is but deferred; for when the head of the family is not permitted to be any longer steward, who must take care for those he leaves behind? The change is sudden—a moment turns the competence of the widow to penury: by being educated somewhat above the common line of life, his children “cannot dig, and to beg they are ashamed;” the barrel of meal soon begins to waste, and the cruse of oil to fail;—but I forbear,—for I would apply to your understandings rather than your feelings: I would

would persuade you, that they who have seen better days, are in an especial manner entitled to your compassion, for they are doubly sensible of their present affliction. I would wish you “while you have time, to do good unto all men, “and especially unto those who are of the household of “faith *.”

* Gal. vi. 10.

